

Reports on the Eighth International Cancer Congress in Moscow included a story by the science writer of the Associated Press, reporting Soviet doubts of the cigarette-lung cancer hypothesis.

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Russian Cancer Experts Question Cigarette Role

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MOSCOW—The role cigarette smoking may play in causing lung cancer is still questioned in the Soviet Union.

At the Eighth International Cancer Congress, the Russians indicated a show-me attitude toward the views of the U.S. Public Health Service, the American Cancer Society and Britain's Royal College of Physicians—all of whom contend cigarette smoking ranks high among possible causes of lung cancer.

Key Russian cancer experts at the congress said they felt there is no question that cigarette smoking is among possible causes of disease. But they also brought out that most Russian doctors feel they are not ready to assess the relative importance of smoking compared with other possible causes.

Russian doctors, like those from the West, list industrial smoke, automobile exhaust fumes—and even viruses—as among the other possible causes.

Prof. Leon Shabad of Moscow, Russia's top research man on cancers possibly caused by industrial and other chemicals in the environment or by radiation, put it this way at a news conference.

"Undoubtedly, cigarette smoking is among the various causes (of lung cancer) . . . Undoubtedly it is far from being the only reason."

Shabad indicated that Soviet doctors accept statistical evidence that heavy smokers stand a much greater chance of getting lung cancer.

He said tobacco smoke contains a number of chemicals known to be capable of causing cancer in animals—including one called benzpyrene.

But he said that while a man could breathe in a few milligrams of this chemical from 40-50 years of smoking, "we should not forget that the same amount . . . is breathed in from the air (from industrial smoke and automobile fumes). . ."

Russian doctors say that research is under way to try to improve cigarette filters.

A Hungarian scientist reported finding a preponderance of "right side" lung cancer in a series of 300 cases of the disease he studied. He argued that if smoke from cigarettes were the main cause of lung cancer, such cancers would be more or less evenly distributed between lungs. Some American doctors took a dim view of this report.

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